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ABSTRACT

The efforts of a group of Quinault parents and the Early Childhood Education program of Edmonds College resulted in the establishment of a quality child care program which is parent managed, relevant to the community, and able to meet state requirements for day care. Funded by a Technical Assistance Contract and administered by Alaska Federated Natives, a contract that was college credit based and provided trainers sensitive to the values of Indian people and willing to travel regularly to the small coastal village site provided both the parent board and child care staff training from Edmonds Community College staff. Board member training focused on developing a statement of philosophy, curriculum goals, policies, procedures, and job descriptions. A $75,000 grant to build a center involved the board in examining space and equipment needs and other details of the construction process. Staff members received more intensive and extensive training: a 1 1/2 year program of 45 credits met qualifications for a one year certificate in Early Childhood Education. Courses focused on human growth and development, curriculum methods, behavior management, supervised field experience, and first aid. Because the staff had formerly worked together without training and under poor supervision, bad habits had been developed and morale was low. The attitude that training was being imposed upon them was never totally overcome. Areas still needing concentration include staff turnover, the "baby sitter image", inservice training for new employees, and improved bookkeeping procedures. (NEC)

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# PARENT MANAGED DAY CARE

## INDIAN - STYLE

Helen L. Sally Taylor
October 4, 1979

In an often mist and rain shrouded setting on the coast of Washington State a new day care center has just held its grand opening. The center is an enterprise of the Quinault Tribal Nation and is located in the Quinault village called Taholah. The reservation, an area of forested wilderness, is bordered on its western side by the Pacific Ocean and on its eastern side by the Olympic Mountains.. There are two major areas of population, the villages of Queets and Taholah, separated by a seventy mile drive over winding roads. Progessive tribal management, particularly in forestry and fisheries, has resulted in expanding employment opportunities for both men and women on the reservation. Increased employment has resulted in an increased need for quality child care. This is the story of the efforts of a group of parents and a college to meet that need.

### The Beginning

In July of 1977, childcare was being provided in a provisionally state licensed center, housed in a three bedroom HUD residence. The staff was composed of CETA employees relatively untrained in childcare. The center lacked standard day care equipment, the major pieces of furniture consisting of an adult sized dining room set and three overstuffed chairs. In this setting, the day care board representing concerned parents met with the coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program of Edmonds Community College, a community college located over 200 miles from the village, to discuss the feasibility of a contract for training of the board and child care staff. Three factors were considered of major importance: first, a system which was college credit based; second, trainers sensitive to the values of Indian people; third, trainers willing to travel regularly to the small

RC 011762

coastal village. (Board members were insistent that the training be on-site. Previous training efforts had not produced satisfactory results.)

Management of the center by a parent board was a unique tribal enterprise. The parents involved wished to be knowledgeable about childcare and to demonstrate that a parent-cooperative model of day care management could be developed. To achieve this goal, the board recognized the need for day care management training, as well as childcare training for the staff.

The Trainers

Upon agreement of a training contract, trainers from Edmonds Community College began to travel to the reservation. One visited the center regularly several times each month, spending time with both board and staff, and upon return to the campus, mailed written evaluations and new assignments. This training was provided through a Technical Assistance Contract to the tribe, the contract administered by Alaska Federated Natives.

The second trainer visited the center on occasions to observe the center staff, interview, and write evaluations of their performances. Evaluations were carried out using the CDA (Child Development Associate) pre-assessment form. Monies for this training were provided through a state Department of Social and Health Services day care training grant administered by North Seattle Community College.

Both trainers were trained and experienced in parent education, early childhood education, and the administration of day care programs. Additionally, the major trainer had previous experience in working with Indian groups.

The first aid trainer was an employee of the tribe's Social Services Department.

Board Training

From the beginning it was decided that this board would be a managing rather than advisory board. Because the board was composed of working parents, training for board members took place during lunch hours and evening sessions. Major focus of the early training was the development of a statement of philosophy and the development of curriculum goals for the center. Later training involved the development of policies, procedures, and job descriptions.

The obtainment of a $75,000 grant to build a center involved the board in an examination of space and equipment needs, in conversations with architects and builders, as well as in research and reading regarding model centers. Board members spent evenings and lunch hours with the trainer examining catalogs and making lists. Purchasing and inventory procedures for the program were developed. Blueprints were examined. Eventually, contracts were signed and construction began.

The board also came to recognize the need for workable job descriptions. A painful period began when it became clear that the board's management role involved thoughtful decisions regarding retention or dismissal of employees. In a small village the size of Taholah, family connections, friendships, and enmities are many. Separation of roles was difficult. Impact of decisions within the center affected relationships without. For a time, the board bogged down in indecision.

Staff Training

It was expected that staff members would receive more intensive training, as well as more extensive training, than board members. A plan was developed which would allow each staff participant to receive a minimum of 45 credits over a period of approximately a year and a half. The 45 credits enabled each

participant the opportunity to qualify for a one year certificate in Early Childhood Education from the college. The requirements and course work replicated on-campus programs, and included:

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| Introduction to ECE Program Management | 5 credits |
| Human Growth and Development | 5 credits |
| Curriculum Methods I (Art Music, Language & Literature) | 5 credits |
| Curriculum Methods II (Math & Science) | 5 credits |
| Curriculum Methods III (Program Integration) | 5 credits |
| Behavior Management | 3 credits |
| Supervised Field Experience | 15 credits |
| Selected Topics | 2 credits |
| First Aid | (0) credits |

Much of the training was demonstration and practice oriented and involved the staff in the planning, development, use, and evaluation of activities with the children. With only a few exceptions, the training was carried out either through demonstration, or on a one-to-one basis. Because the center was in operation already, it was not possible to remove staff members in a group for a more formal lecture presentation, the only exception being a schedule of visits to other centers where staff members visited in pairs. Reading assignments were generally in the form of four or five page handouts. Only the human growth and development course required a textbook, although a reference library was developed and used for all course work.

The staff training was much more difficult than the board training. The staff had worked together, under poor supervision and without training, long

enough to have developed bad habits. Morale was low. There was constant bickering, and constant evasion of responsibility. Treatment of the children tended to be punitive. Although the staff verbalized the need and desire for training there were an inordinate number of lost assignments, etc., demonstrating an actual resistance to change and a feeling that training was being imposed upon them. This attitude was never totally overcome, and although five of the original seven did eventually complete the training, only one of the five continues to work for the center at this time.

Despite sporadic staff resistance, conditions for the children did improve. Enrollments grew as word of a better environment and expanded activities spread. Although only limited funds were initially available for equipment and supplies, the staff was encouraged to improvise and create. During the children's nap time, they were often found cutting up discarded magazines, preparing craft supplies, and decorating the rooms.

The attitude and morale of both trainer and trainees varied from visit to visit, reaching a low point coinciding with the low point for the board. Attempts by trainers to spark continued progress were met with lethargy. Staff members waiting for completion of the new building and arrival of the new equipment became reluctant to expend energy on interim activities. "When we move" became the catch phrase. A new approach was needed. The staff was enrolled in a rigorous structured first aid class, a change from the more easy-going developmental course work. The change of trainer, change of focus, and short-term goal setting got the momentum underway again with staff members eager to earn their first aid cards.

The Crisis Point

Completion of the building and the long awaited move was seen by many as a solution to the center's varied problems. New equipment, a building designed

for day care, and a "trained" staff would result in a utopian child care program. Instead, the move into the new building and the arrival of box after box of new equipment served to highlight the still unresolved issues.

At this point, new members not suffering from burn-out were added to the board. Board officers, backed by larger support, "bit the bullet" and ultimately accepted their role as managers. The long delayed decisions regarding staff retention were made, resulting in new hirings, promotions, and more than one dismissal or resignation. The board made use of the tribal mechanisms for disciplinary interviews, hearings, and dismissals. The wisdom of developing thorough job descriptions, and following appropriate management procedures became apparent when grievances were filed by staff and later dismissed by the tribe.

The Center Today

Today the child care center is housed in its sparkling new building. The rooms are alive with color and activity. It is fully licensed. The resources of the tribe and the local community are being drawn in. A nutritionist regularly visits the center, as does a speech therapist. A local community college, through a Washington State Title XX grant, has begun to participate in on-site training, and members of the staff attend workshops on the local college campus. Board members attend the Title XX advisory committee meetings to provide input to state Department of Social and Health Services representatives regarding their center's needs. It is expected that such training will continue to be provided, possibly supplemented by additional tribal training monies arranged at the request of the board.

Although the board members are pleased with the progress that has been made, and although the center is receiving wider acceptance in the community,

the board has identified several areas which need additional concentration. Among these are: staff turnover due in part to a low salary scale, the "baby sitter image" which results in feelings of low status among employees, the need for a system of in-service training for new employees, and the need for improved bookkeeping procedures. Leaders are also aware of the need for continued motivation of both board and staff. Too, the center needs community and technical help in the development of its play yard, which at the present time is a field of sand and rocks.

Although the problems of the center are not all resolved, and probably never will be, and not all goals have yet been reached, those persons involved in the development and growth of the center feel justifiably proud of having developed a child care program which is parent-managed, which is relevant to their community, and which is able to meet state requirements for day care. Still "green and growing," the Taholah Day Care Center is an inspiration to working parents everywhere who want to be involved in their children's day care program, and is an example to tribes and colleges of what can be accomplished when their efforts are combined.